

Message Text

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41

ACTION SSM-05

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 SS-15 NSC-05 USIE-00 OC-05 CCO-00

SSO-00 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 INRE-00 SAB-01 PM-04 L-03 H-02 IO-11

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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 549

INFO USMISSION SINAI IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PFOR EG IS

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR PRESS VISIT TO SFM

REF: SINAI 137

1. AS DEPT AWARE, GOE SENSITIVITY TO PRESENCE OF AMERICAN SFM TECHNICIANS IN SINAI HAS BEEN HEIGHTENED BY CONTINUING SYRIAN MEDIA ATTACKS ON SINAI II IN GENERAL AND SYRIAN CHARGES OF AMERICAN "SYMBOLIC OCCUPATION" AND "ESPIONAGE ACTIVITIES" IN SINAI SPECIFICALLY. AS A RESULT, GOE IS CONCERNED THAT EXCESSIVE PUBLICITY FOR SFM ACTIVITIES BY AMERICAN AND INTERNATIONAL PRESS WILL BE SEIZED UPON BY SYRIANS FURTHER TO FLAY THE EGYPTIANS AND THEY WOULD LIKE TO AVOID SUCH PUBLICITY. APART FROM THIS, GOE IS CONCERNED ABOUT PROXIMITY OF SFM BASE TO E-1 STATION, WHICH IN VIEW OF LATTER'S ROLE IN GOE DEFENSE PLANNING HAS SECURITY ASPECTS. IT WANTS NO PUBLICITY FOR E-1 OTHER THAN WHAT GOE ITSELF CARES TO GIVE. EGYPTIANS HAVE MADE CLEAR TO SIILASVUO THEIR AVERSION TO PUBLICITY AND ARE CURRENTLY A BIT MIFFED WITH SIILASVUO FOR NOT BARRING PRESS VISITS FROM UN BUFFER ZONE.

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2. WHATEVER THE MERITS OF GOE CASE, IT WOULD APPEAR TO HAVE NO LEGAL BASIS ON WHICH TO PROHIBIT VISITS OF JOURNALISTS COMING FROM ISRAEL TO BUFFER ZONE IF SIILASVUO PERMITS THIS. WE ASSUME ISRAEL WILL NOT BAR JOURNALISTS AND WILL CARE LITTLE ABOUT ANY EMBARRASSMENT WHICH PRESS COVERAGE OF SFM CAUSES FOR EGYPTIANS. IF SIILASVUO PERMITS JOURNALISTS TO ENTER THE BUFFER ZONE AND SFM HAS NO OBJECTION TO THEIR VISITING SFM BASE, EGYPTIANS CAN DO LITTLE BUT COMPLAIN TO US. IN THIS CASE, HOWEVER, WE WILL HAVE TO RECKON WITH GRADUAL GOE SOURING NOT ONLY ON SIILASVUO, BUT ALSO ON SFM, ESPECIALLY IF RESULTANT PRESS COVERAGE IS PICKED UP BY SYRIANS AND USED TO ATTACK SADAT AND SINAI II.

3. AS WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY POINTED OUT, THERE IS OBVIOUSLY A LEGITIMATE AMERICAN PRESS INTEREST IN SFM. CONCEIVABLY, IT MAY BE MOST INTENSE IN THE EARLY STAGES WHILE SFM IS STILL NEWS. IN INTEREST OUR RELATIONS WITH EGYPTIANS, IT WOULD BE WISE TO KEEP SUCH PRESS VISITS TO SFM TO ABSOLUTE MINIMUM. PERHPAS IT MAY BE POSSIBLE TO EXPLAIN PROPOSED JOHNSON/BLOOM VISITS, IF THESE CANNOT BE DELAYED IN TERMS OF INITIAL MEDIA INTEREST WHICH WE CAN TELL EGYPTIANS WILL, HOPEFULLY, GRADUALLY TAPER OFF. WOULD IT NOT BE POSSIBLE TO ESTABLISH A TV/PRESS POOL FOR SUCH AN INITIAL VISIT IN EARLY MARCH AS A MEANS OF AVOIDING THE ARRIVAL OF A SUCCESSION OF PRESSMEN?
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